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A CO-OPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH.

THE KAWEAH COLONY.

The actual existence of a Co-operative Commonwealth based on the principles advocated by the NATIONALIST will be a pleasant surprise to many, and, it is hoped, will prove a home-thrust at the gloomy forebodings of the "croakers" whose final argument is, was, and always will be, "it can't be done." The social problem being yet in a chaotic condition, there is ample scope for the most dismal speculation, and the opportunity for a pessimistic wail is generally well improved. Therefore, it is refreshing to be able to score a tangible victory for our side.

Some three years ago, a Co-operative Colony was formed, embodying in its constitution the principles laid down in Laurence Grönlund's "Co-operative Commonwealth." The projectors were all students of political economy, and had for several years been recognized as leaders of the labor movement on the Pacific Coast. Among them were John H. Redstone, Burnette G. Haskell, W. C. Owen, and P. Ross Martin, all of whom are at present active members of the Colony, and who all have acquired, more or less, a national reputation in the labor movement. The experience of these men, who had faced large audiences night after night, and who had written column after column, upon labor topics, led them to believe that movement would be the most successful, which gave employment to the workingman and enabled him to "work out his own salvation." It was found that there is nothing in the laws to prevent labor from organizing and conducting its own affairs co-operatively; being its own Capitalist, Monopolist, Advocate, Judge and King. It was worse than folly then to rail against Monopolists and the existing state of things, while the wage-worker held in his own hands the key to his shackles, but was too indolent or ignorant to use it. Investigation proved that natural resources were acquirable, and labor abundant. The next requisite was sufficient capital, and competent direction. These were found and secured, and pioneers were set to work.

The location selected for the theatre of operations was in every way desirable, the natural resources ample, and the climate pleasant and healthful. The only drawback was its almost inaccessible position. The "Croaker" shook his head and said: "it can't be done." The Capitalist said: "it will take a quarter of a million." The students of Marx and

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Grönlund said: "Labor is King, and he decrees that it *shall* be done," and lo, it *is* done. For nearly twenty miles, winding through canons and deep ravines, or climbing among rocky peaks and precipices, these disciples of Marx, Grönlund, and Bellamy have worked determinedly, patiently, and unremittingly, until their task is at last nearly accomplished. They have built, it is conceded, the finest mountain road in the State, and have unlocked the door to one of nature's richest store-houses.

This Colony, known as "Kaweah Colony," is delightfully situated in the verdant foot-hills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California, on the North fork of the Kaweah River, about a hundred miles south of the far-famed Yosemite Valley, and near where colossal Mount Whitney lifts its snow-capped peak to the sky; and is distant about thirty-five miles from Visalia, the county seat of Tulare County. Within its territory, owing to its varying grades of altitude, are embraced three distinct degrees of climate, and a corresponding range and capacity of production; for which reason the region in and around Kaweah is most admirably fitted for co-operative effort. Of the various orders of mineral, and vegetable production, it has been said, California can produce ninety per cent. If this be so, Kaweah can produce at least ninety per cent of the California products. This concentration of natural resources at one point insures an inexpensive and rapid exchange of the products of labor; something very essential to co-operative success. All things considered, the Pacific Coast is probably better fitted, as a field for co-operative effort on a large scale, than any other portion of the globe.

The objects of the Colony are set forth in its constitution as follows:—

"The general nature of the business to be transacted is to engage in the production and distribution of wealth, the collection, extraction of raw material, its fashioning by hand-craft and machine-craft into commodities, the culture of both animal and vegetable product, the production of food, clothing, shelter, machinery and any and all other articles of convenience, necessity or luxury, the establishment of proper methods of distribution, transportation and storage, the establishment of just and correct systems of credit, account and exchange, the building of houses for ourselves and families, their co-operative administration, the arbitration and just settlement of disputes between ourselves, the practice among ourselves of just systems of social organization, the education of ourselves and our children in proper physical, mental, moral, intellectual, and artistic lines, to improve the health, secure the happiness and perfect the well-being of each and every member. And as well to propagate and extend in the world at large the idea of universal and just co-operation."

The administration is thoroughly democratic, all having an equal voice and vote at the legislative assemblies of the Commonwealth. The executive consists of a board of five Trustees, elected by the members, who

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serve until they resign, or are re-called by the members. They are subject to recall at any time, by a vote of a majority of the members. The plan of administration consists of three great divisions, viz.: 1. Division of Production. 2. Division of Distribution. 3. Division of Commonweal. These again are sub-divided into departments, viz.: Collection, Extraction, Growing, Hand-craft, Transportation, Storage, Delivery, Finance, Administration, Education, Public Service, Amusements, etc. Again, these are sub-divided into bureaux and sections. The executive appoints the chiefs of divisions and departments, the workers in the departments having the power to remove their chiefs. The by-laws provide for the exercise of the Referendum, Imperative mandate, the Initiative, and Minority representation. Disputes are settled legally by arbitration as provided in the laws of California. The system of administration does not and cannot in anyway conflict with the laws of the land, but on the contrary, will strengthen and maintain all laws that are based on justice and the natural rights of man. Socially, the effect has been remarkable; a more peaceable, orderly, and intelligent camp of workingmen never existed. During three years of the hardest toil and the roughest pioneer work, the first overt act has as yet to be recorded. Among the families, the amenities of a true social condition are maintained. Each one feels the responsibility of upholding the social integrity of the Colony; and as a result, an inoffensive and charming rivalry exists to outdo the other in neighborly acts.

But it is among the children that the best effects of our modern social life are observable. The child is undoubtedly, to a greater extent than is generally admitted, the victim of its environments. If for no other reason than that children, who are to become the citizens of the next generation, should be taken out of the unhealthy slums of large cities and placed where they can have healthy moral and physical training, such Colonies as Kaweah should be encouraged and maintained. At Kaweah such a thing as corporal punishment is never resorted to, and reproof is seldom needed. If a wrong has been done, the child is shown his error, his intelligence and sense of justice is appealed to, and as a rule he frankly acknowledges his fault; he is not degraded by punishment, and is therefore on his honor bound not to repeat the offense. This system in the training of children in connection with the examples of their elders has had a remarkable effect on their deportment towards each other; the fretting, quarreling, and crying, so common in every-day life becoming un-

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known. A more active, healthy, and happy set of children never existed; their merry laughter and song, can be heard between school hours, as unrestrained as the warbling of the birds or the rippling of the rills that course the fern-covered ravines of their beautiful mountain home. As a feature of our social experiment, this is the most encouraging, the proper culture and training of the young being the foundation upon which our future success depends.

Up to the present time the pioneer Colonists have been summering and wintering in tents, without suffering any hardships, and very little inconvenience. This will seem incredible to those unfamiliar with the "glorious climate of California," but they have lived, loved, and are happy in their cosy white cotton dwellings, and some at least will feel a pang of regret at deserting them for the more pretentious dwellings of marble and redwood, which will take their place, as soon as these resources are opened by the completion of the road.

The commercial value of the improvements made by the Colonists, roughly estimated, is about $200,000. The value of the natural undeveloped wealth embraced in the territory belonging to the Colony is very great; inestimable, in fact, to such an enterprise. The timber interest alone would run into almost fabulous figures. The growth of the Colony has of course been pitifully retarded for want of means to push the work forward; for, as no speculations were offered to Capitalists, and no wealthy philanthropist embraced the opportunity of delighting his soul in doing a truly meritorious work, — such opportunity being still open, — the Colony has had to depend entirely upon its own resources, viz.: pluck and perseverance. But its contributed Capital has been sufficient to build the road and keep out of debt. Nothing has been mortgaged, not a cent of interest paid, and no debts are owing to outsiders.

The three prime industries will be: lumbering and woodwork of all kinds; marble-quarrying and marble work of every description; fruit-growing, drying and packing. These will constitute the exports of the Colony or the articles it will sell or exchange for outside products. Other industries for the manufacture of articles for home consumption will also be inaugurated as soon as practicable. The water-power is ample at almost any point on the river and will prove invaluable for factory purposes in the future.

The exchanges of the Colony are effected by a system of time-checks, which are used as money in all transactions between individual members

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and the Colony. The "minute" takes the place of the "cent" as the unit of value. These time-checks work admirably and are of great convenience. They constitute, in fact, a non-fluctuating currency, and are complete in every detail as a medium of exchange between members.

The climate of Kaweah is all that can be desired. Within a distance of twelve miles at altitudes ranging from 2,500 to 8,000 feet various grades of temperature can be found; in the lower altitudes, the grape, olive, orange, fig, prune, and peach attain perfection, while at the higher, the apple, pear, hazel-nut, and gooseberry find their natural home. At 2,500 feet the snow seldom falls; at 6,000 to 8,000 feet it is frequently from four to five feet deep.

The scenery in and around Kaweah is magnificent. In spring-time the hill-sides are brilliant with flowers in endless variety. The "Giant Forest" with its marvellous groups of mammoth trees, the Kaweah peaks, covered perpetually with snow, and Mount Whitney, the highest pinnacle in the United States, are objects of perpetual interest.

The main purpose of the Colony is to put in practical operation a system which can extend until it embraces, in time, the whole world. The plans of such a system have been tabulated and talked of for years, but no attempt has been made to operate on a scale as broad as that adopted at Kaweah. There are no social or religious idiosyncrasies to excite prejudice and no opportunities for speculation to awaken cupidity. The utmost liberty of thought and action is permitted, restriction being applied only when the rights and privileges of others are infringed or jeopardized. Under these conditions it is hoped that the most perfect manhood and womanhood will be attained, brute passions surrendering to moral restraint and men learning to "become a law unto themselves."

In no sense can this institution be regarded as an ordinary commercial enterprise organized for the benefit of a select few. Its constitution and plans permit of its extension indefinitely, so as ultimately to embrace all who desire to change from the competitive to the co-operative system. It is in fact a reform movement, moving on broad practical common-sense lines, taking truth for its guide, and having for its object the fraternization of the human race.

The Colony extends a cordial invitation to all to investigate its methods of social and industrial reform. Copies of its constitution and by-laws can be obtained free by mail, by addressing the "Secretary," Kaweah Colony, Visalia, California.

J. J. MARTIN.

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